

SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE

KENT CONRAD, RANKING MEMBER

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Contact: Stu Nagurka (202) 224-7436
Steve Posner (202) 224-7925

CONRAD STRIKES PROVISIONS FROM RECONCILIATION BILL Measure Harming Children, Elderly, and Poor Is Removed Budget Bill Sent Back to House

Washington, DC – Senate Budget Committee Ranking Member Kent Conrad (D-ND) today successfully struck several provisions, including a measure harming children, the elderly, and the poor, from the GOP spending reconciliation bill. The action will send the amended reconciliation bill back to the House of Representatives, where it will have to be voted on again.

Senator Conrad initiated the move by raising a parliamentary point of order against several harmful provisions that violated budget rules. Three Republicans joined all Democratic Senators and one Independent in voting to uphold Senator Conrad's point of order and strip several of the provisions from the bill.

"This reconciliation bill unfairly targets children, the elderly, and the poor," Senator Conrad said. "It is our obligation to strike bad provisions that violate the rules. I hope that Congress will take this opportunity to reconsider this legislation and create a better product for the American people."

"We have come to this point because the Majority insisted on ramming through bad legislation, at the last moment, with little or no public scrutiny," Senator Conrad said. "The 774 page bill was written behind closed doors, with no input from the Minority. It was filed in the dead of night and voted on in the House at the crack of dawn. Then House members left town."

The stricken provisions were all in violation of the Byrd rule – a rule intended to prevent abuse of the fast-track reconciliation process by prohibiting extraneous, non-budget-related provisions from being included in any reconciliation bill. The removed provisions included:

- *A Medicaid medical liability provision which allows hospitals to deny treatment to low-income individuals who are unable to pay.* Not only is the Majority raising co-payments on low-income Medicaid beneficiaries, but they are also shielding hospitals from medical

liability if they refuse to treat those low-income people who are unable to pay.

- *Reports focusing on policy matters that do not belong in a reconciliation bill.* These reports have no budgetary effect whatsoever and should never have been included.

Senator Conrad's point of order also sought to strike a foster care provision that will prohibit grandparents from receiving foster care payments. "The foster care provision, in particular, is as mean-spirited as it is ill-conceived," said Senator Conrad. "We know that placing foster kids with their grandparents puts them in the most stable and healthy environment. Prohibiting support for grandparents who take in foster children is wrong."

The foster care provision will overturn a 9th Circuit Court case that allowed grandparents with limited incomes to receive foster care payments when parenting vulnerable children. Unfortunately, that provision was not removed.

"This action by no means fixes all that is wrong with this reconciliation bill," Senator Conrad added. "This reconciliation bill still contains many other bad provisions and is still part of a package that will increase deficits and debt. But we have successfully removed several bad provisions that happen to also violate budget rules."

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